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ABSTRACT

In separate interviews, Andrew, Ellen, and Caroline, English teachers from the same high school, each pause thoughtfully when asked about how their students respond to literature. Each day, they work carefully with scores of students--organizing lessons, reading together, observing and assessing student work. A study sought to place teachers' conceptions of student understanding more firmly into the discourse of English education, particularly in discussions of teacher knowledge and teacher learning. Three questions guided the original study: (1) How do English teachers conceptualize student thinking and understanding in relation to literature? (2) What sources influence their thinking about students' literary responses? and (3) How do such conceptions of student literary understanding shape or guide instructional planning? The focus was on a limited dimension of the teachers' responses--namely how conceptions of literacy shaped teacher thinking about student literary response. Data were collected through four semi-structured interviews with each teacher and classroom observation. The three teachers showed an intense concern about student reading ability, but they held differing views of reading. Andrew's and Caroline's views reflected skills-based research models which focus on observable responses, while Ellen's concerns, which emphasize metacognitive awareness in responding to texts, echoed the cognitively-oriented research of the last 3 decades. Findings suggest that English department colleagues harbor diverse orientations toward "reading," and that such conceptions of student reading may play a significant role in instructional planning with literature--leading teachers to emphasize different modes of response in students' early encounters with literature. (Contains 6 notes and 53 references.) (NKA)

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Negotiating Literacy and Literary Understanding:

Three English Teachers Thinking about their Students Reading Literature

A paper presented at the annual meeting
of the
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F. L. Hamel

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To my parents,

Theodore L. Hamel -- died February 20th, 2001

Clara Mae Hamel -- died March 15th, 2001

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Negotiating Literacy and Literary Understanding:

Three English Teachers Thinking about their Students Reading Literature

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Introduction

In separate interviews, Andrew, Ellen and Caroline, English teachers from the same high school, each pause thoughtfully when asked about how their students respond to literature. Andrew says he is looking for rich discussions and higher level, analytic thought among students, but he is troubled by how his students approach literary texts, and he recites differences between his own reading of a quality poem and how students typically read:

> *I would probably read it through fairly quickly . . . noticing things I liked, phrases, whatever, lines, and maybe coming back and picking it up, you know, picking through it again and doing a little more thorough job. When students come to it, if they're assigned to read it, I think it works in a different way. . . . they would read through it, struggle with the idea . . . and do it as an "assignment." First of all, half of them probably wouldn't read it. But the ones who did would probably be the ones who like poetry.*

For Andrew, the fact that literature is "assigned" often undoes motivation, and student reading suffers immensely. Ellen, a second year teacher, smiles and shakes her head. Many students, in her experience, simply avoid the effort required to understand a literary text more completely.

> *They could read—they could read anything, but they could get to the bottom of the page and they have no idea what they just read. . . . Some kids, and this is I think typical of most kids, will not stop and look up a word, so they could go through a whole piece with 50 words in it that they didn't know and not think twice about getting to the end, waiting for someone to tell them what it meant.*

For Ellen, students often misunderstand the act of reading as a blind recitation, a practice she suspects is actually taught to students in earlier grades.

Caroline, the most experienced of the three and a co-department chair, intently analyzes a student paper about the play Cyrano de Bergerac. Caroline's subject matter knowledge in English and European Literature is particularly high. Her comments, though, reflect the difficulty teachers have "reading students' minds" when it comes to their thinking about literature.

> *Mary understands that Cyrano and Christian care for each other but they have their differences. [But] she didn't tell me where. I'm going to have to read her mind. And in writing, I need to know where . . . . [reading student paper] ... Tell me more, you know. What's she thinking? Is she just saying that? Because I can't tell. I have trouble reading her mind there. And maybe I shouldn't try to read kids' minds because who knows what they're thinking.*

Each day, Andrew, Ellen, and Caroline work carefully with scores of students—organizing lessons, reading together, discussing, observing and assessing student work. The brief comments above, however, reflect both teachers' proximity to student efforts and the elusiveness of students' understandings of literature. Determining where students are at, how they think, why they enjoy or resist literature—each of these represents the

complicated work of knowing how and what students in fact "learn" in a literature classroom. For Andrew, Ellen and Caroline, experience in the classroom itself has not made such thinking easy to identify, to support, or to draw upon for teaching.

Studies in mathematics education have suggested for over a decade the crucial relationship between teacher understanding of student thinking within a subject area and student learning (Carpenter, et al, 1998; Franke, et al, 1998; Fenema, et al, 1993; Peterson, Fenema & Carpenter, 1991). According to this research, student learning depends on more than teacher subject matter knowledge, a repertoire of subject-specific teaching methods, and a reflective mentality. Instead, these studies highlight an understudied domain of pedagogical knowledge—a teacher's ability to conceptualize *student thinking* productively, to recognize the incipient strategies and approaches students may bring to disciplinary tasks and contexts, and to develop instruction accordingly.

Such "understanding of student understanding," however, has received scant attention in the English education community. While the research base around students' on-line approaches to literature and writing has grown, studies of how teachers in fact conceptualize student understanding have been rare. This study provides such an account. It seeks, above all, to place *teachers'* conceptions of student understanding more firmly into the discourse of English education, particularly in discussions of teacher knowledge and teacher learning. Three questions guided my original study: How do three English teachers conceptualize student thinking and understanding in relation to literature? What sources influence their thinking about students' literary responses? How do such conceptions of student literary understanding shape or guide instructional

planning? For the purposes of this paper, I focus on a limited dimension of the teachers' responses – namely how conceptions of literacy shaped teacher thinking about student literary response.

Conceptual Framework/Review of Literature

Understanding understanding

Gadamer (1996) reminds us that the question of understanding immediately places us within a hermeneutic circle. What does it mean to understand understanding—a student's understanding of literature, or a teachers' understanding of students—when our own "understanding" is implicated in the process? For Gadamer, 20th century social science has generally drawn upon Enlightenment norms of scientific rationality to solve the puzzle. This tradition constructs objectivity through systematic doubt and controlled experimentation—methods that attempt to reduce or eliminate prejudice and false assumption. Researchers in education, for example, might use various experimental designs to learn about what "really happens" when students read, and then report the results to teachers—who are then expected to correct their biases in relation to the new knowledge.

For Gadamer, however, understanding is not about eliminating prejudice. Our biases are not something we overcome. In Gadamer's words, "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being" (276-277). Human knowing and understanding are radically bound to finite points of view, or horizons, and our knowledge exists always within a hermeneutic circle—that is, a circle of interpretation rather than objectivity. Our "constant" task in relation to any "other," for Gadamer, is to "bring forward" or highlight our own prejudices, to recognize

how such fore-conceptions shape our knowing, and to allow them to be challenged and revised by the other. In the event of understanding, then, prejudices are not reduced or eliminated but are brought forward and given a place within a larger horizon. In Gadamer's words: "Working out [one's] fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (267). That is, "objectivity" only occurs as we realize that our own prejudices, which persist, are inadequate—that something else is there, something not constructed by us. Gadamer sees in this event a "fusion of horizons" (306). Truth, then, does not emerge from within one pure horizon, or from simply espousing the horizon of the "less biased" expert.[1] Rather, understanding is generated in the in-between spaces where horizons meet, where otherness is recognized, and where prejudices are revised.

From a teacher's point of view, understanding student understanding cannot be conceived as learning or perceiving the student's horizon in itself, or adopting the expert's conception of student response. Again, for Gadamer, understanding never occurs this way. All understanding of students necessarily presupposes a teacher's limited horizon and bias. Rather than objectifying "student understanding" as a thing in itself, in particular as something researchers alone can identify, Gadamer highlights and encourages the interplay between teacher and student horizons. Teachers' understanding of their students' understanding, the primary construct for this study, is less a matter of objectifying and testing teachers' (partial) knowledge in relation to the research base on student understanding—although attention to this research base is clearly necessary. To

1 Grossman and Shulman (1994) note that research on teacher knowledge has tended to compare teachers' knowledge of a particular topic to the disciplinary knowledge of experts in the field (6).

understand understanding will involve, instead, richer accounts of teachers' starting points in thinking about students and attention to ways in which teachers identify their own horizons in relation to others. In addition, understanding student understanding implies concrete circumstances—particular teacher horizons in relation to particular students and texts. Knowledge of student understanding cannot occur in terms of general or theoretical students, but is always integrated with specific contexts and circumstances.[2]

Disciplinary Understanding

We can trace the origins of recent investigations of reader processes with literature to the work of I. A. Richards (1929). His study of Cambridge undergraduate students' written responses to literature examined the ways students think about literary texts. While Richards remained dismayed at the "non-aesthetic" character of student thinking, his work suggested that successful responses to literature are not natural performances but involve conventional strategies that require cultivation and support. Subsequent attempts to identify unique dimensions of literary thinking have followed Richards in relying on students' written or oral responses after having read a piece of literature. Purves and Rippere (1968), for example, developed four broad categories for describing students' written responses to literature. These categories, which have been used extensively in analyzing student response, include: "Engagement/ Involvement" (efforts to make personal or emotional connections to a text), "Perception" (statements of description and summary), "Interpretation" (attempts to generalize meanings from a text),

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2 Both legal and theological hermeneutics, Gadamer claims, provide the appropriate model for this kind of grounded event. In law, for example, the meaning of a law never exists in the abstract but is discovered precisely in its practical application to a specific case.

and "Evaluation" (efforts to judge the quality of a text). Beneath these categories, Purves and Rippere include over 120 possible sub-elements of response. This descriptive account is echoed in Applebee's (1978) study of children's thinking about literature, which assumed four main intellectual modes of response: narration, summarization, analysis, and generalization.3

More recent investigations continue to detail "literary understanding" as a unique way of knowing. In a set of case studies of adolescents reading literature, Thomson (1987) used post-reading interview questions to create a taxonomy of student literary response. The taxonomy identifies "unreflective interest in action" as the least complex form of response. As readers' develop, they use strategies such as "empathizing" (engaging emotionally with characters and/or situations) and "analogizing" (drawing connections between life and literature) to draw themselves into a narrative. The most complex responses involve "reflecting on the significance of events and behavior," and "defining one's own and the author's ideology." Thomson suggests that such processes, which overlap in practice, occur progressively—so that "later" stages of response depend upon earlier processes. In addition, student response within any stage can occur in a "weak" or "strong" mode.

Langer (1991, 1995) has characterized readers' unique interactions with literature as "stances" rather than linear processes—in other words, as positions that readers adopt in relation to literary texts rather than a set of intellectual activities. Langer identifies four stances: "being out and stepping in" to a literary world; "moving through" such a

3 See Beach & Hynds 1991 for a review of research studies on students' responses to literature.

world: "stepping back and rethinking what one knows;" and "stepping out and objectifying the experience." She emphasizes that literary understanding involves fundamentally a process of "envisionment"—entering into and exploring the possibilities of a world other than ones' own—and suggests that educators have underestimated the stances of "stepping in" and of "moving through" a literary work. This conclusion is echoed by Wilhelm (1997) who also ascribes priority to students' strategies for entering into, and dwelling within, the storyworlds of literature. Studying both proficient and resistant readers in his classes, Wilhelm found that students who were turned off by literature often bypass the strategic moves of visualizing, placing oneself within the world of the text, and elaborating on that world for themselves. He suggests more attention to drama-based or role-playing activities to promote students' access to the secondary worlds of literature.[4]

Expert-novice studies have provided yet another look at the cognitive terrain of literary response. Earthman (1992) used a reader-response framework (Iser, 1978) to identify unique characteristics of expert literary readings. Using short stories and poems, Earthman found that expert readers (graduate students in English) "filled gaps" more skillfully than novices, used a text's "repertoire" of signals more elaborately, and assumed a variety of perspectives more easily. Novice readers (college freshman), Earthman writes, were not only more interested in a single right answer, but they also wanted to get there as quickly as possible. Novices, like experts, filled gaps in texts, but

4 The research of Thomson, Langer and Wilhelm reflects reader-response assumptions for reading literature (Iser, 1978). Marshall and Smith (1997) claim that, despite an array of critical approaches to literature, only reader-response theory has found widespread passage into secondary schools and into the education of English teachers.

they were less likely to revise their initial impressions. In addition, novices overlooked gaps that experts found extremely relevant.

Peskin (1998) likewise found several distinctions in the way experts (graduates students in English) and novices (undergraduates or high school students) responded to difficult poetry. When faced with obscure language, novice readers drew on general comprehension strategies like re-reading, but they were unable to invoke discourse-specific operations as experts did. Faced with a particularly unclear passage, for example, expert readers typically swerved away from comprehension altogether and began to comment on how the language was behaving in the passage. *(Examples of expert comments: "Shorter lines. They look kind of punchy, an epigrammatic effect. The tempo of the poem is sped up...." "It's becoming mysterious... This sounds like a riddle. It sounds like a nursery rhyme. It's a passage which is more pleased with ... creating a mystery than it is with making itself clearly understood").* At such moments, experts focused on binary oppositions, wordplay, and structure as cues for their response, rather than trying to figure out the plain sense (250-251). With novice readers, on other hand, when passages became obscure, most "had access only to very general reading strategies experienced in the comprehension of prose" (252). Peskin thus distinguishes between "general" strategic operations and those disciplinary strategies that reflect the unique "syntactic" modes of discourse within a discipline (see Wineburg, 1991, for similar conclusions in the reading of historical texts).

In his work on reading narrative, Rabinowitz (1987) argues that readers must learn to recognize and respond to a specific discourse to properly play their role as both narrative and authorial audiences with literature. He argues that narrative texts assume in their readers certain shared conventions—"rules of notice" (textual signals that cue

readers to give attention to specific characters or events), "rules of signification" (signals that give readers cues to a text's intended values or meanings), and so on. For Rabinowitz, readers must learn to "read" such discourse-specific signals if they are to develop the capacity both to interpret and resist literary meanings. Hillocks (1989) and Smith (1989) have drawn on similar assumptions in suggesting that literature teachers must scaffold for students the procedural knowledge necessary for interpreting satire or irony. Hamel and Smith (1998), likewise, describe a unit of instruction that provided secondary students' with strategies for interpreting unreliable narrators. Without internalizing the "rules" of a particular literary discourse, the authors argue, students may try to respond personally to complex texts but with little satisfaction or growth as readers.

Teacher understanding of student understanding

Efforts to promote teacher thinking about students' understandings have occurred more often in the areas of mathematics and science. Research in elementary mathematics education has focused attention directly on student thinking processes within a discipline and on how teachers understand their students' disciplinary strategies. Peterson, Fennema & Carpenter (1991) investigated teachers' knowledge of their students' addition and subtraction problem-solving and found that teachers consistently overestimated student use of recall of facts as strategies and underestimated the extent to which students used counting strategies. The researchers also conducted a series of workshops to guide teachers through videotapes of 1st graders solving word problems aloud. Teachers then conducted their own interviews of students to test the notion that students in fact do bring problem-solving strategies to such tasks. Researchers found that teachers from their workshops developed "principled knowledge" of how young students might think their

way through such problems. Teachers came to acknowledge the "variety of informal strategies" that students bring to problem solving, even before memorizing addition and subtraction facts (80). Teachers in these studies have came to believe "that instruction should build on [particular] students' existing knowledge" rather than on preconceived topics in the discipline (Fennema, et al, 1993).

Other studies suggest that teachers who analyze student mathematical thinking learn to identify the "cognitive root" of student response—building upon students' informal knowledge of specific math topics. In self-studies designed for inservice teachers (Brinker, 1998), for example, participants learned that students brought to class extensive knowledge about certain math topics. The most noticeable practical result for the teachers in this study was that they began to reconstruct their beginning lessons to rely less on the text. Instead, teachers gave students problem-solving tasks first so that students could exhibit what they know. Such studies, the authors argue, go beyond typical "action research," because "systematic thinking about students" moved teachers beyond general learning strategies to focus on the contextualized disciplinary knowledge students need for learning (cf Carpenter, Franke, & Levin, 1998).

In reading education, Greenleaf and Schoenbach (1999) have examined professional development possibilities for secondary teachers. They describe changes in teachers' knowledge of reading processes, changes in pedagogical content knowledge, and changes in classroom practice resulting from teacher participation in institutes and workshops based on recent scholarship in cognitive science and on socio-cultural models of learning. In particular, Greenleaf and Schoenbach identify implicit theories teachers rely on that run counter to theories espoused in the reading research community. Among

these are teachers' "incomplete understanding of schema theory," in which teachers attempt to make all reading relevant to students lives and "completely avoid teaching literature or topics that are more distant from student experience." In this view, teachers misperceive low background knowledge as an insurmountable barriers to comprehension—and tend to stay with what students know, rather than scaffolding opportunities for them to make connections between what they know and what is new (7). Another alternative theory involves a "simple view of reading." Greenleaf and Schoenbach found that some teachers use perceptions of "decoding fluency" to make determinations about student reading ability. A corollary of this belief is that students must achieve fluent readings before they can perform higher level thinking with texts (8). The authors comment:

> In each of these counter theories, what has been shown by research to be a *necessary* element of proficient reading is misunderstood by teachers as *sufficient* for reading development. These theoretical positions interact with the instructional roles teachers initially take and shape both their instructional practices and the very curriculum content available to students (8).

Greenleaf and Schoenbach conclude that "reading across the curriculum" workshops for teachers have been ineffective. Teachers who take such courses typically do carry over what they have learned into classroom practice. Equipping teachers with teaching strategies for reading, Greenleaf and Schoenbach argue further, may be unhelpful if not accompanied by "ongoing inquiry into reading processes, texts, and student reading that can help teachers develop a generative conceptual framework that can assist them in

making instructional sense of these strategies (9).[5]

In English education, especially at the secondary level, few studies have investigated teacher learning in relation to student literary understanding. Gomez and Comeaux (1990), in a study of the early experiences of eight new English teachers, illustrate the difficulty teachers had matching progressive perspectives and techniques, developed in English methods courses, with actual students they encountered in schools, particularly with respect to the diversity of learners. They conclude that the teachers needed "more time-intensive opportunities to think through why the multitude of strategies they brought to teaching did not work with particular learners." Zancanella (1991) studied the reading practices of five English teachers in order to better understand why they made the instructional decisions they did. He found that instructional planning is often guided more by a teacher's own reading strategies than by student strategies. Holt-Reynolds (1999) likewise offers the case of one especially skilled reader of literature (a teacher education student) who had difficulty perceiving her own readings of literature as anything other than "average." The pre-service student thus did not see her role as investigating differences between her reading and student readings or as sharing with students the distinctive expertise she brought to texts.

Rabinowitz (Rabinowitz & Smith 1998) explores the distinction between student readings and teacher readings by juxtaposing "first readings" of literature and what he calls "reading against memory." "Reading against memory" represents what teachers do

5 Schoenbach, et al (1999) describe a teacher framework for creating "literacy apprenticeships" for students in secondary schools. Such apprenticeships focus on cultivating four dimensions relevant to students' reading success: the social dimension, the personal dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the knowledge-building dimension. Student metacognition in relation to each of these dimensions is considered critical to student growth in reading.

to plan for instruction after having read a text multiple times. Reading for class, in other words, amounts typically to "re-reading" for teachers—reading in light of one's already-developed expectations, beliefs and conclusions about a text. Teachers attempt to imagine students' needs with such texts, but the conclusions of earlier readings inevitably become the landmarks that frame one's plans for teaching and expectations for student understanding.

Unfortunately, such landmarks are poor guides for students, Rabinowitz argues. Reading against memory typically involves what he calls a "reading of coherence," a reading that assumes or seeks the overall design of a work. First readings, however, are vastly different. Students' first readings are typically "readings of configuration"—readings necessarily characterized by tentativeness and confusion, a "perplexing walk" for readers. Rabinowitz writes:

> The initial act of reading inevitably involves expectations that aren't met, predictions that don't work out, details that are missed, patterns that aren't completed... That sense of dislocation... is among the fundamental experiences the first time through a text, especially a complex one (100).

Rabinowitz thus suggests that teachers' own readings of literature reflect a potentially problematic resource for understanding student understanding – one that can result in misjudgments if teachers are not conscious of the unique nature of their own readings.

The research reviewed here illustrates a general scarcity of research on teachers of literature and, in particular, on how secondary teachers build interpretations of student thinking. The studies that do exist suggest both the centrality of this knowledge for

effective teaching and how difficult it may be to learn. Tharp and Gallimore (1988), using a case study of an elementary teacher teaching literature, conclude that "even at the level of beginning reading, teachers must develop professional-level skills if they are to move beyond recitation, if they are to overcome the assumption that children should learn on their own" (247). Such professional learning, I argue in this study, will depend upon our more thorough understanding of the starting points English teachers have for thinking about their students' ways with literature.

Method

Setting

This study was completed with three volunteer teacher/participants from the same department in a mid-sized secondary school. Of the three high schools in its district, Shaw High School has the strongest academic reputation. The school has ranked nationally for its numbers of students that take Advanced Placement examinations. Shaw serves a population it describes as "economically and culturally diverse," and students who attend come from a mix of rural, working class, military, and professional families. The ethnic composition of the school is mostly homogenous, primarily Western European descent (72%), with smaller percentages of Asian (12%), African American (4%)and Pacific Islander (5%) and Hispanic (4%) students. The English Department at Shaw offers a college prep curriculum. All 10th grade students take a general sophomore English course, which revolves around gaining familiarity with various textual genres: short story, novel, poem/drama, research. At the junior and senior levels, students take electives that focus on writing, literature or communication. Examples of electives include Speech and Oral Interpretation, American Literature, Creative Writing,

Shakespeare, European Literature, College Writing & Research, and Modern Novel. In addition, at the time of this study, the department had a class called Basic English, for sophomore students who had exhibited difficulty with reading and writing tasks in past schoolwork.

Data Collection

This study employed two primary data collection strategies: individual interviews and classroom observation. The interviews generated the heart of my findings below. The purpose of the observations was to corroborate and clarify the conceptions of student thinking that emerged in the interviews, and to look for relationships between teacher approaches to student thinking and classroom practice.

I conducted four semi-structured interviews with each teacher. The first interview focused on background information as well as eliciting general beliefs and practices in teaching literature. I also wanted to gain insight into each teacher's general perceptions of students and how students approach and learn literature. The second interview focused on teachers' own thinking processes with literature. In this interview, I asked each teacher to read and think aloud about two different texts—a text they had recently taught and an unfamiliar text.6 After the think-aloud part of this interview, teachers were asked to reflect metacognitively on their own reading processes, to described what they noticed about their own responses and interaction with these texts.

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6 I determined the familiar text based on my observations and discussion with teachers. In two cases, the familiar piece we read was a text a teacher was currently teaching or had recently finished teaching. In one case, the teacher had taught the novel the previous year. One teacher read the opening paragraphs from Richard Wright's short story, "Long Black Song;" A second read from the final act of Cyrano de Bergerac; and the third read the opening chapter of Lord of the Flies. Each teacher read the same piece for the second think aloud with an "unfamiliar" text—Seamus Heaney's poem, "Personal Helicon." Before

Finally I asked teachers to predict how students would respond to these same texts, and to describe and explain some lessons they might use to support students with these pieces of literature.

The third interview focused on artifacts of student learning and teacher evaluation of these artifacts. I asked each teacher to bring something concrete that might reflect student understanding of literature from their classes. Artifacts could include journal writings, papers, drawings, audiotape, videotape, or any other item by which teachers could evaluate a student's responses to literature. I asked teachers to bring in artifacts that they were genuinely puzzled by, or that they wanted to think about further, as well as artifacts they believed reflect a distinction between "understanding" and "misunderstanding" with literature. During the interview, I asked teachers to evaluate students' performances, to explain why they selected these artifacts, to discuss why they assessed these artifacts as they did, and to discuss what kind of teaching support these students might need.

The fourth interview involved two steps. First, based on class observations and conversation with each teacher, I selected one student from each teacher's class for a think-aloud interview. In this student interview, I had students read from a familiar piece and an unfamiliar piece of literature. Students read from a text they had read or were currently reading with their English class. Students also read "Personal Helicon." I used the same process as with the adult readers. Later, I reviewed each tape and selected sections of the tape to present to teachers.

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each think aloud, I explained the procedures and allowed each teacher to practice using an excerpt from a fiction piece in the New Yorker (Price, 1998).

In the second step, I brought the videotaped student think alouds to a teacher interview and used it as the text for discussion. I did not prepare specific questions to direct teachers' responses to these videotapes. Instead, I gave each teacher a VCR remote and had them pause the tape when they had a thought or reaction. Occasionally I paused the tape myself to ask a teacher's reaction to a particular segment. After viewing the videotape, each teacher was also asked to make judgments about this student's literary sense-making based on the think-aloud. Finally, I asked teachers to develop "next steps" in instruction based on the student's responses.

Data Analysis

Each interview audiotape was transcribed verbatim. After each transcript was made, I re-listened to the audiotapes and created a summary of the entire interview. Each interview was then coded to search out general patterns and themes. I generated coding categories based on my first readings of the transcripts, and I refined and reduced these codes as I continued to re-read.

In re-reading the transcripts I noted recurrent themes as well as data that conflicted with emergent themes. I also used data from my field notes of class observations, which I had summarized separately, to triangulate findings. I focused, during this period in the analysis, on one teacher at a time. For each case, I wrote a lengthy analytic memo (25-40 pages) which provided informational background on each teacher, followed by a description of the patterns and themes I saw in each teachers' thinking about student understanding. I revised these memos several times, as I shared them others, received feedback, and continued to re-read data and review my notes.

The next stage of analysis involved cross-case comparisons of data—searching

across the memos and returning to the transcripts to identify larger patterns, themes, and discrepancies. I wrote a summary memo listing the key themes I perceived across all three cases. I then returned to the interview summaries, as well as to the transcripts themselves, to search for confirming or disconfirming data in relation to the cross-case themes. This process was essential in capturing the shades of difference in the transcripts, and helped guard against over-simple categorizations of teachers' thinking.

Methodological Concerns

A few aspects of this study should be highlighted as potential weaknesses. First, since I relied on a single site, the teacher thinking I report here is subject to hidden, local influences. As we learn more about the role that teaching context plays in teacher decision-making (Grossman, et al, 1999; Louis, et al, 1996; McLaughlin 1993; Newell & Holt, 1997), it becomes impossible to treat teacher thinking in solely individualistic terms. This study, then, may reflect teacher thinking especially unique to Shaw High School or to the English department at this school. One teacher I spoke to, in fact, suggested that the norms of this department were toward more traditional, New Critical analysis of texts—rather than toward reader-response or other theoretical orientations. "Individual cases" of teacher thinking, thus belie contextual factors that may shape the ways in which teachers think about their work—contextual factors that may be best illuminated by employing cases from different settings. Since I was unable to do this, I point out that generalizing about English teachers from these particular cases may be problematic. On the other hand, Applebee (1993) reports ongoing similarity within English departments, with respect to curricular choices and instructional methods (cf

Stigler and Hiebert, 1998, discussing math teaching). In this respect, the patterns of teacher thinking about students at Shaw may be something other than idiosyncratic.

A second issue involves the general brevity of my classroom observations. Hillocks (1999) suggests that such classroom observation may be critical to understanding subtleties of teacher thinking. While the data collection for this study centered on the interviews, the absence of longer-term observations, may have kept less obvious aspects of teacher thinking from view. Indeed, what I learned about each teacher from observing even a handful of instructional periods was enormous. More classroom data would have supported even richer cases.

Findings

Reading as Foundation

For Andrew, Caroline and Ellen, general "reading ability" was a frequent concern as they considered their students' responses to literature—a potent framework for understanding student performance with literary texts. This emphasis came as a surprise to me—given my explicit focus on disciplinary thinking. Yet, the concern became apparent as each teacher partitioned literature students, in some fashion, into "readers" and "non-readers," and as each highlighted poor reading skills as a major obstacle to literary understanding. The teachers together felt that a growing number of students need significant help with what might be called "basic" reading. Identifying who might provide such support, and how, however, were more difficult questions. Indeed, if concern for reading skill remained consistent across cases, less clear was how these teachers understood reading—what it means to be a "skilled reader," for example—and

how basic literacy is related to literary understanding or to the literature curriculum in general. In addition, each teacher acknowledged having limited confidence, opportunity, and, to some extent, motivation for examining the processes of their students as "readers" of literature.

One of the most persistent characteristics shared by the teachers in this study was the tendency to represent "reading ability" as a foundation for literary understanding—to characterize reading as a pre-requisite skill or set of tools that lay the groundwork for disciplinary thinking. In this respect, each teacher recognized "reading" to be integral and irreplaceable in relation to his or her subject area. Each referred to general reading skills consistently as we discussed student understanding. Yet, each also placed "reading" as conceptually separate from the actual subject matter concerns of literature. Such sentiments arose especially as we discussed the difficulties students have with literature. In each case, talk about student reading emerged as talk about something non-literary—most often as talk about remediation. When I asked Andrew what makes literature difficult for his students, he replied:

> *The ones who are having problems usually it's—the statement is "It's boring."... but it turns out "Well, I can't understand it." Now we have no reading program at the high school level and this is something, in fact, the department has been trying to work on for years to get. We literally have people in the high school reading at a fifth grade level. You give them Gatsby, they're not going to be able to understand much of it. This is one problem, just skill level.*

For Andrew, students' lack of understanding was directly related to reading ability, something he relegated to lesser academic status ("just skill level"). His own ability to

deal with lower readers, he indicated, was limited, and he felt he had neither expertise nor responsibility for student learning when it came to reading level. Some students "usually don't get through the first chapter" with texts like The Great Gatsby, he said. "It may not be their fault. . .but we have no reading program. We have very limited basic English, and I don't know how to bring the lower end particularly through the literature to the level that I appreciate it."

Andrew recognized that the difficulties of such students were related to reading, yet "reading" was not his area of expertise. He explained that, as a teacher, he often had difficulty distinguishing reading problems from lack of motivation. "Sometimes I think they really don't understand it," he said. "They read a sentence that doesn't—[they] don't know the connections that are being made between this sentence and the next, and why we're going there. Sometimes I think it's just an excuse for not paying attention." He acknowledged that students' reading processes were often hidden from his view. "I know they're reading," he said, when we discussed his students' independent reading in class. "I have no idea how deeply they're understanding." Andrew felt more certain, however, that whatever reading issues exist are not genuinely "literary" concerns. He concluded: "The ones who are trying to read and not getting it, I often feel are having just trouble reading. That it's not an issue of literature. It's a matter of just decoding words and putting them in the right order mentally."

Ellen's comments echoed these divisions as well. She explained that she had been rudely awakened her first year when she discovered her students could not read well. She had assumed that students in high school classes should be independent readers: "Well, first I assumed that everyone in my class could read, which is not the

case. . . . Well, they could read but not the level of literature that we were reading. They could read the words but they couldn't comprehend them." Discussing one of her classes, she observed that the lower readers probably needed to be in "Basic," a remedial course:

> *We just had kids in there who belonged in AP English, but they didn't want the responsibility, and I had kids in there who could barely read, belonged in Basic, so it was very difficult to do a lot with that group. The kids who belonged in AP, you know, they couldn't take the pace. They needed it to be faster. . . . The other kids were just clueless*

Ellen, like Andrew, felt that problems in understanding literature could be attributed to low reading levels—to students who can "barely read." She, too, separated out issues of reading from those of literature—suggesting, for example, that better tracking of low readers might make a difference. She also remained uncertain about her own efforts to monitor and support students as readers. As a new teacher, she said she ended up using teaching techniques she was not sure she believed in:

> *Well, I had to give quizzes, had to give reading quizzes because they wouldn't read it unless they knew they were going to be responsible for a quiz. Um, vocabulary quizzes, and I don't what all else I did, but I don't--you know, I feel like in time I will develop better ways to do it, but last year I was just kind of thrown in there and I didn't--I just did what I had been taught, and that's how I did it.*

Caroline, like Ellen and Andrew, separated learning to read from the literature curriculum. Referring to her own English Literature and European Literature courses, she explained: "Usually kids who can't read will not choose those courses because they

know they're harder. We have other courses for kids who don't read well." Low readers may not survive a challenging literature course, Caroline indicated, and the teaching of reading, she implied further, is not the objective of literature classes. Literature students, in other words, are expected to be independent and relatively proficient readers of texts. Like Andrew and Ellen, Caroline also expressed limited confidence in her own ability to judge students and their reading processes. Discussing one student's poorly written literary essay, Caroline speculated: "Yea, I have a feeling she doesn't read well. Well, I don't know, though. When she read out in class . . . she read fine. But it wasn't long— … Now when she gets to paragraphs and that sort of thing I don't know. And I haven't looked up her reading score—to tell how well she reads." When I asked Caroline what she expected from the reading scores, she said: "comprehension, reading speed, all that you get on those reading tests."

If Caroline, Ellen and Andrew each saw reading as a foundation for literary understanding, the notion reflected an underlying ambivalence—with reading central to student understanding, but peripheral to literature teaching itself. Such beliefs echo those of the elementary teachers studied by Walmsley (1992), for whom literature was "what you do after you learn to read, not as something to help you learn to read" (quoted in Burroughs, 1993). The implication for each teacher, though not stated explicitly, was that adequate reading skills were a "given" for literature class, an assumption that left teachers little impetus to examine or investigate their students' ways of processing texts. Interestingly, given their concrete experiences in English classrooms, no teacher actually expected every student to be a successful reader. Rather, the literacy-as-foundation belief left Caroline, Ellen and Andrew with a substantial "reading" problem: They assumed

independent readers in theory, knew they would get inefficient readers in reality, and remained distant from reading difficulties pedagogically.

Reading as Reproduction: Andrew and Caroline

Observing their students read, Andrew and Caroline, in particular, conceived of reading largely in terms of word-based decoding and emphasized reading as a technical activity—geared toward the exact reproduction of the text on the page. The oral reading of strong students, according to Andrew and Caroline, tends to be fluent and without significant error. Such students have strong word recognition skills. The reading of weaker students, on the other hand, is characterized by miscues and inaccurate retellings.

As he listened to two students think aloud, Andrew drew consistent attention to accurate decoding. He made brief observations of fluency as he listened to one student read, for example: "She's misreading occasionally. She's missing words." When the student finished commenting on a short chapter from a novel, Andrew observed:

> *Yea, there was—there were several things she didn't understand in there. She paused on that car, the "Marmon," which I certainly didn't recognize when I ran into it either, but she didn't seem to know what a "switch engine" was. She went right over that without making the comparison that this meant it was a very large car. She went from "vases" to "vase" on her last pronunciation.*

After listening to a second student's think aloud, he concluded: "First of all, he's reading better than she did. He seems to—I haven't seen him miss a word yet."

For both Andrew and Caroline, vocabulary was a first line response in conceptualizing the sub-skills of successful reading comprehension. Reading breakdowns, both pointed out, occur at the word level. Andrew thus imagined how

students might read a particular poem:

> *I think it's pretty clear they might not know what "windlass" is. . . . most of them wouldn't know what a "brickyard" is. A place where they make bricks, I presume, but-- What else would they do here? . . . You know after about the third stanza this--(10 second pause)—they about wouldn't know what a "foxglove" is. "Scaresome" might be an easier word for them than it is for me.*

Yet, Andrew showed some uncertainty, as well, as to the importance of exact word recognition and surface decoding. He continued to point out miscues as he listened to his students read, but he occasionally downplayed their significance:

> *She, again, reads sometimes missing words or kind of reconstructing sentences I think, but I don't see any major thing there other than she didn't understand what, I think she said "irreverent" tomfoolery instead of "irrelevant," which might have helped her to understand tomfoolery if she had read the "irrelevant" and knew what irrelevant meant, but not knowing the word, she skips over it, and I think that is pretty common*

Andrew's comments suggest that his concern for reading miscues results less from a firm belief in exact decoding as a way of reading. In the absence of other literacy frameworks, however, he responds to what is most conspicuous in a students' reading.

Caroline, like Andrew, drew strong connections between word recognition and overall reading ability. When I asked Caroline why young people find literature difficult, for example, she speculated, "Maybe they can't read very well. Their vocabularies are really shallow." Observing the videotape of one of her students reading literature, Caroline focused first on vocabulary and exact oral decoding: "He doesn't have a very

good vocabulary, does he?" she said, after her student stumbled on the word "perpetually." After I had prompted the student to "articulate his thinking," Caroline stopped the tape: "I'm wondering if he knows what the meaning of the word 'articulate' is. Because if he doesn't understand 'dappled' and 'uncongealed' —then 'articulate' would be maybe difficult for him, too." The student had mispronounced both words in the first paragraph of his reading. Later, after more reading miscues, Caroline commented again: "The vocabulary is getting in his way . . . Yea, I think the vocabulary is clouding his perception of what's going on. And it is tough vocabulary. And particularly as I suspect that he's a kid who doesn't read a lot."

Reconsiderations

Observing students reading aloud, Caroline and Andrew noted that students have difficulty reproducing texts exactly as they are written. However, Caroline and Andrew also found phenomena they hadn't predicted—reading practices that didn't easily fit a reading-as-reproduction theory. One issue which caused reconsideration for Caroline, for example, was one student's continued "extemporizing," as she put it —his tendency to read words differently than they were written. Caroline criticized this practice, yet as she listened to the student's verbalized thoughts and reactions, she found that he was responding strongly and understanding the text well. Along with several reading miscues and some verbalized confusion at the start of one passage, for instance, the student stopped suddenly to summarize what he had read. The student concluded:

> *The scene was done. All that was left was the body bags. There was nothing left for him there. Everybody [has] already been talked to, but it didn't matter because it was— tonight's news was over and it was going to be for tomorrow. . . . I'm starting to*

piece it together.

Stopping the tape herself, Caroline commented on this summary—suggesting some dissonance between her own picture of reading and the student's observed practice:

> *Yea, he's getting the general gist of this even though (laughter) he doesn't know what it's all about. Well, that he—I find that amazing that he's having a terrible time getting through this. He's not interested in it, but it's still saying the core of what the story is about, but he's not intrigued enough to want to go on.*

As she worked through the dissonance, Caroline's conception of the student's reading shifted from poor skills "clouding his perception" of the text to his not being "interested" or "intrigued" enough with the text. Later in the videotape, however, the student criticized, with pointed emotion, the main character's approach to her news-reporter job:

> *[student] It says right here she was a stick-and-move artist moving from a* [text=living off the] *police scanner and hitting the scene, getting a few names and a few quotes, and a little local color. She's just there for the glamour. She's not there because she wants to know about the news, and she's not there because she wants the people to know about the news, she's just there because it's like, well, that's my job, or I have to do that. I'm a reporter, I have to get a little bit. It's unimportant to her. I mean I would be a little bit more concerned if I was her-- people had died and there's been an assassination. I mean I would be a little bit more concerned, a little more in depth for the people that have just died.*

The student had generalized about the main character's attitude, provided some evidence, placed himself into the character's role, compared his own potential reaction with hers, and proceeded to critique the character's behavior. The fact that the student would respond so strongly through a miscue-ridden reading surprised Caroline, and she reacted

by re-formulated her conception of the student's understanding and interest level—making the latter now more of an open question.

> *I am impressed that he does understand pretty much what this is on, and he hits this about she is a "stick-and-move artist". He hit that, he likes that. Or at least he understands it. I'm not sure he likes it but he understands it and so, yea. . . Even though he thought it was a man, you know, still he understood the basic characteristics of the character.*

Observing her student read, Caroline felt torn in her evaluation. She recognized that he was "going for the meaning," as she put it, and that he was having success in the process. Yet she still suspected his decoding problems would result in distortion. Caroline acknowledged in the end, however, that this student's way of reading might differ from her own.

> *I don't know (chuckle). As this follow-the-rules type of person, I like to read what the translation tells me here because that's the piece of literature. But I guess I'm more of a left brain person that's not quite that creative. I kind of like to stick with what's here, and then do my interpreting from what is there, but . . .I think that that is the way he reads.*

A different issue arose for Andrew, as he listened to one of his student's reading a passage from Richard Wright's collection, Uncle Tom's Children. The student read aloud a description of a woman nursing her child and remarked to me, her interviewer, that it was awkward to read about breastfeeding in front of a male:

> *[student] I don't know, I just—like reading it, especially you being a guy and talking about a woman's breasts. She was breast feeding the child. I think that's odd. But I*

mean it's the literature so you just keep on reading it, but that one I felt uncomfortable.

Andrew responded to the videotape, wondering aloud about the social context of the reading interview and its effects on his student's reading: "Her comment at this point is addressed to your presence rather than her reading of the story, as I'm hearing it... so does this change how she is reading in some way?" Andrew initially separated my "presence" from the student's "reading of the story," although he recognized there was some interaction between the two. Andrew felt, in fact, that her reaction was a fairly common one: "You don't usually talk about our private body parts to relative strangers," he explained. These observations raised issues that had not emerged in our earlier talk about student reading. Andrew noted that "she's aware of this environment around her...as she's reading." His comments, at least momentarily, focused less on a single individual's processes and more on reading as a public or social event. When we talked about whether my presence was creating a different kind of reading, Andrew concluded: "Well, I mean it must be a different process since she's reacting differently than she would if she was alone." Such observations raised issues with potentially significant consequences. Is a school reading a public or a private event? How are students' responses influenced by their perception of social environments? What kind of reader—individual or social—does Andrew assume in teaching literature? Such implicit questions offered new dimensions on student reading—beyond the measurement of literal accuracy.

Working at It: Ellen

Ellen's view of reading differed from her colleagues' view. The primary distinction she made was between those students who "read for understanding," as she

put it, and those who "read to get done." Students who read for understanding are aware when they are confused and will re-read until they understand. Students who read poorly, Ellen explained, typically decode without attending to thinking processes. They often mistake decoding with the more complex processes of reading itself.

> *There are some kids who will just read through the whole thing and not understand what they're reading, but they'll come to class and say, "I read it." And you'll say, "Well, what did you think about this?" "Oh, I didn't really understand that." "Why don't you read it again?" It doesn't ever occur to them to read something twice because they don't get it the first time.*

For Ellen, students who read to "get done" may decode efficiently, but they usually don't understand the work involved in making sense from texts. Students often "notice things [but] they don't see the connections, if it requires more work than just what's on the surface," Ellen explained. Successful readers, on the other hand, put forth individual effort with texts. As she observed one student read the opening chapter of Lord of the Flies, Ellen admired the student's tendency to puzzle over grammatically complex sentences and difficult vocabulary:

> *I'm just thinking that she's reading for understanding because I think I've seen a lot of students read aloud where they just go through the words, and this is not making sense to her because it is—it can be, that can sound like a fragment if you don't read it right. So she's working very hard to figure out how it makes sense. Um, and I noticed that before in the first couple of sentences. She stopped, when she stumbled on a word, to make sure she had the right word. . .*

This student, Ellen noted, was "very aware" of her confusion and became "bothered" when language didn't fit or make sense, and she paused on lines or words that were unclear to her. The student sometimes didn't resolve such difficulties immediately, but Ellen felt that she was strategic in occasionally leaving difficult sections behind and waiting for future clarification.

As we observed the videotape of her student reading, Ellen identified visualizing as one strategy this reader used, emphasizing how the student monitored her own visual picture. She commented again as the student struggled with a passage:

> *She seems to be relying very heavily on visual, and when she stumbles on these things like the scar, that "it" is referring to the cabin, and she couldn't quite figure that out. . . . I think she's—she's kind of been making a movie in her head. And it's running. And when she comes across a sentence or a new piece of information that she can't make sense out of, it bothers her because she thinks it's supposed to be part of the picture.*

This student knew to keep a visual narrative running in her head, Ellen felt, and that everything she reads is supposed to fit in the visual narrative. Ellen stopped again as the student met with another confusing passage:

> *I think she's not distinguishing between what each of the two characters is doing. She's putting actions of one boy onto the other boy . . . but she's—she's visualized what she's read but for some reason she hasn't separated them clearly enough in order to understand that sentence. But she's working very hard to understand that sentence, I think. Because I think the idea about the confusion with the fair boy is—will work itself out.*

Ellen realized the student's visualizing had not yet clarified the passage, but she focused on efforts to monitor comprehension over an accurate reading. Such comprehension problems, in other words, would work themselves out for the self-monitoring reader. The fact that the student was "working very hard"—re-reading, puzzling, visualizing—distinguished her as an effective reader for Ellen.

Ellen felt less confident, however, explaining why most students fail to monitor in this way, and what she as a teacher might do about it. Ellen explained that this student's reading was an exception rather than the rule. She reads "a lot like how I read," Ellen said, "and a lot like how I would expect somebody to read." Adapting to less accomplished readers was more complicated, though. When she realized her students in class weren't following the text successfully, she slowed down the process to focus on basic comprehension. "They couldn't keep track of the characters. So that's why . . . we just went through it chapter by chapter, here's what's happening. . ." Her practice focused on making sure students got the content of the plot—teaching goals Ellen characterized as "very simple." She said: "My goals were just for them to understand plot structure and to understand what happened in the book, and that was as much of a goal as I could have with some of my students." Ellen, again, felt uncomfortable with some of the practices she resorted to:

> *So it's hard, because I see myself sometimes forced to do certain things like I—for some of the pieces that had really difficult vocabulary, I made them weed those out and look them up and I had to give them a quiz because they wouldn't study them if I didn't quiz them, and I had to have grades for them. So, I don't really*

like that. I liked the college courses that I have where you wrote papers and you had an essay final....a midterm and a final.

Ellen felt trapped by this dilemma, explaining that her own attempts to help students read successfully ended up producing negativity in some students and reinforced for them the artificiality of school literature—something Ellen hoped to avoid in her teaching. "And that's when I make kids start to hate English," she said, "because they see English as this thing you do in the classroom and not what they do in their everyday lives." Despite her conception of reading as a process, Ellen found it difficult to imagine a good literature class differently from her college seminars and to provide pedagogical activities that responded to students' reading needs with literature.

Discussion

I have tried to characterize the intense concern teachers in this study had for student reading ability, the assumptions embedded in their talk about reading, as well as uncertainties or dissonances that emerged around these conceptions. The differing views of reading represented by Andrew, Caroline and Ellen are not especially surprising in light of prevailing paradigms of reading research in the past century. Andrew's and Caroline's views reflect skills-based models which focus on observable responses. Ellen's concerns, which emphasize metacognitive awareness in responding to texts, echo the cognitively-oriented research of the last three decades (see Kucan & Beck, 1997). Such differences in orientation might be explained simply by the experience levels of the teachers in this study. Caroline and Andrew, veteran teachers in the district, are less likely to have met with cognitively-based research in reading during their teacher education programs, while Ellen, in her third year of teaching, is more likely to have had

such exposure. The study suggests, in the least, that English department colleagues harbor diverse orientations toward "reading"—a dimension of English teachers' thinking currently neglected in studies of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Moreover, given teachers' shared conception of literacy as a basic foundation, such differences may run well beneath the surface of departmental discourse and rarely emerge as a topic for professional dialogue. English teachers, in this respect, may have little chance to benefit from the "distributed cognition" of their colleagues or from professional discourse about reading as a dimension of student learning (Wineburg & Grossman 1998; Putnam & Borko 2000).

Recent studies in professional development have directed attention to student thinking within a discipline. This study suggests, however, that English teachers may have limited language and few frameworks for examining the details of students' processes for understanding—if we understand "reading" to be central to such understanding. Andrew and Caroline's emphases on word recognition and decoding skills, to be sure, represent important dimensions that researchers have long identified as critical for reading success. Several studies, for example, have argued for the close relationship between word recognition and comprehension, suggesting that students "cannot understand oral and written language without knowing what most words mean" (Flood & Lapp, 1992). However, current research in reading comprehension places discrete skills, such as vocabulary awareness, within larger and more complicated frameworks of strategic reading (Schoenbach et al, 1999). Reading research emphasizing verbal think alouds (see Kucan & Beck, 1997) suggests that successful readers engage in multiple, intersecting, but identifiable processes: establishing purposes for reading,

setting and revising goals with particular texts, bringing forth prior knowledge, generating images, analogies and cognitive associations while reading, predicting, asking questions, articulating confusion, and using metacognition to monitor understanding. From this perspective, reading miscues are seen less as indicators of reading deficit and more as necessary moments in the process of learning to read—moments that require guidance from expert readers who are aware of, and can exert cognitive control over, their own multiple strategies. Experts readers (teachers) might model how they deal with confusion while reading, for example, making such processes explicit and available for younger readers. Teachers like Andrew and Caroline, this study suggests, have had little exposure to these cognitive perspectives on reading. Although they recognize the importance of reading skills for their students' engagement with literature, they may have few ways of talking about reading processes beyond targeting discrete, word-level breakdowns. Observing reading phenomena that are unfamiliar, teachers may bring the issue to rest using broad-based psychological theories (e.g. brain hemispheres), as Caroline did.

The issue for these teachers, however, goes beyond developing a more extensive vocabulary for student reading strategies. Andrew, Caroline, and Ellen, as we have seen, each assumed a robust subject boundary between reading as a kind of generic knowledge and literature as a disciplinary event. Each assumed the belief that reading is central to literary understanding but not really part of the discipline of literature itself and therefore not their responsibility. Redressing the reading concerns of these teachers' with more emphasis on "reading instruction" or "reading in the content areas," in other words, may only beg the issue. Teachers' preoccupation with subject matter boundaries, for instance, is

well-documented (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994; Hargreaves & MacMillan, 1995; Siskin, 1995), suggesting that attention to student reading processes with literature may depend upon teachers' ability to conceptualize those processes as disciplinary. The teachers in this study were unfamiliar with approaches to teaching which are mindful about such disciplinary assumptions about reading. No teacher, for example, distinguished explicitly between what it means for students to read and what it means for students to read literature. This study suggests, then, the importance of diversifying teachers' epistemology of reading to include both general processing strategies and disciplinary or "domain-specific" (Hofer & Pintrich 1997) dimensions. Observing and discussing audiotapes and videotapes of students thinking aloud with literature may help teachers begin (as occurred in Caroline's 4th interview) to construct more diverse images of student reading within the discipline. Teachers' conceptions of reading as non-disciplinary otherwise may conspire to keep teachers at chronic distance from the textual strategies of their students.

Ellen's case, in this respect, remains instructive by itself. Despite Ellen's conception of student reading as a metacognitive process, she responded similarly to her colleagues when it came to classroom curriculum and instruction. Like Andrew and Caroline, she did not expect to focus, in literature class, on students' reading strategies—an assumption that, regardless of reading orientation, left her with limited instructional options when students had problems. The activities she did use, she felt, represented remedial work of sorts, work she didn't expect to have to do with teenage readers. In short, like Caroline and Andrew, Ellen had difficulty conceptualizing the challenges of student reading for teaching—although she clearly made some efforts. Ellen's case suggests that younger teachers may be developing more detailed and varied conceptions

of students as readers, but that such conceptions remain on the margins of what "counts" in the literature curriculum. Even with her concern for student engagement, Ellen's conception of curriculum centered on communicating the basic content of classic texts—teaching the "what happened," the content of the text itself as curriculum, or perhaps historical information surrounding the text. Such assumptions were shared by Caroline and Andrew as well, but their persistence in Ellen's thinking, given her "process" and "metacognitive" orientation toward reading, suggest the difficulty of any curricular transition toward student understanding. Indeed, pre-service courses in areas like "reading in the content areas" are still usually separated from methods courses in teaching literature—emphasizing the divisions between learning to read and learning literature. Teacher educators may have few school-based models or examples to offer that exemplify reading support integrated into "content-area" instruction. Although current research on reading suggests a surprising consensus on "best practices" (Pearson 1999), examples of such practices in content area classes are only just beginning to emerge (Schoenbach, et al, 1999). Re-orienting new English teachers toward issues of student understanding will require more focused attention to the relationship between subject matter learning and the varied ways students read texts. Teachers entering the profession, in particular, may need practical models of integrated reading support, access to student thinking, as well as opportunities to critically assess diverse conceptions of student understanding with colleagues.

Finally, the non-disciplinary conception of reading assumed by these teachers should be brought to light for the significant influence it may have on the teaching of literature. The purpose of reading, in this "pre-disciplinary" view, is typically seen as

gathering neutral information from the text—a perspective, in fact, that reflects efferent (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976) or paradigmatic (Bruner, 1986) assumption for reading. In other words, teachers with this conception may implicitly bring "non-literary" assumptions to student reading—assumptions that reflect what Scholes (1989) calls "textual fundamentalism" —the belief that texts contain some neutral or self-evident dimension, a literal level upon which all reasonable persons can arrive and agree (qtd. in Cherryholmes, 1993) While Scholes term is dramatic, the assumption itself may be widespread. Nystrand (1997) found, in his study of numerous literature classrooms, that a majority of teachers felt that "getting the facts down" was a necessary first step in student thinking about literature. Nystrand argued that this orientation lead teachers to frame the initial step of literary understanding as "literal reading," as a matter of transmission and recitation—a pattern Ellen found herself uncomfortably pursuing during her first year. This study suggests such conceptions of student reading may play a significant role in instructional planning with literature—leading teachers (despite response-oriented English methods courses, in Ellen's case) to emphasize efferent modes of response in students' early encounters with literature.

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